



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

May 11, 2006

News Release

Restaurant owner arrested for knowingly hiring illegal aliens
21 illegal aliens were arrested at restaurants in St. Joseph, Mo., and Cedar Falls, Iowa

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents arrested one of the owners of a Mexican restaurant here last night following worksite enforcement operations at his Missouri and Iowa restaurants.

Julio Zapala-Urbina, co-owner of Julio's Mexican Restaurants in St. Joseph, Mo., and Cedar Falls, Iowa, was arrested at 6:30 p.m. on criminal charges of knowingly hiring illegal aliens to work at his restaurants.

His arrest followed yesterday's execution of a sealed federal search warrant, and the administrative arrest of nine illegal aliens at his St. Joseph restaurant. ICE agents also executed a sealed federal search warrant at Zapala-Urbina's Cedar Falls restaurant April 27 during which 12 illegal aliens were arrested.

This investigation began March 23 after ICE was notified of a man whose Social Security number was discovered to be invalid, following his application to reside in a Cedar Falls mobile home village. The man indicated that he worked at Julio's restaurant. ICE agents later arrested two other illegal aliens who were involved in a traffic accident in Benton County, Iowa. They both also indicated that they worked at Julio's restaurant.

Further investigation revealed that none of these employees had been required to complete any paperwork or provide any documentation in order to work at the restaurant, which are federal requirements.

ICE special agents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, executed a federal search warrant April 27 at Julio's Mexican Restaurant at 126 Brandilynn Blvd., Cedar Falls. They arrested 12 restaurant employees, and seized business paperwork, tax forms, a laptop computer, business bank account information and \$17,000 cash. One of those arrested during this operation was restaurant co-owner Juan Lopez-Angel, who illegally resides in the United States. Following this operation, the bank account for this business was also seized.

"Businesses who knowingly employ illegal aliens are on notice that they will be criminally prosecuted," said Pete Baird, assistant special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Kansas City. "Using ICE's unique immigration and customs law enforcement authorities, we'll also make every effort to seize all assets that may be associated with the illegal activity."

According to the criminal complaint, many of the employees never completed any paperwork or produced any documentation indicating that they were legally authorized to work in the United States. Since 1986, all newly hired employees must complete Form I-9 in which they declare their citizenship. The I-9 also indicates what documents they used to prove their legal work status.

This operation is part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Deegan, Northern District of Iowa, is prosecuting this case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.